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SUBJECT: Who's Who in the Gusenbauer Cabinet

REFS: A) Vienna 52 B) Vienna 45 and previous

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Summary and Comment

1. (SBU) President Heinz Fischer swore in the new Austrian Cabinet on January 11. The Social Democrats (SPO) and People's Party (OVP) each 7 ministers and three state secretaries, reflecting the closeness of the October 2006 election results (SPO with 35.3% and OVP with 34.3%). On the SPO side, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer's team includes several long-time confidants and advisors, including Women's Minister Doris Bures, Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Werner Faymann, Justice Minister Maria Berger, Defense Minister Norbert Darabos, Transportation and Infrastructure Ministry State Secretary Christa Kranzl, and Finance Ministry State Secretary Christoph Matznetter. Gusenbauer insisted on a 50% quota for women, and he also had to ensure sufficient representation of SPO-controlled states. The SPO list includes experienced politicians, such as Faymann and Berger, but also colorful newcomers, such as Education and Art Minister Claudia Schmied and Social Affairs Minister Erwin Buchinger. Schmied is well connected in Austrian cultural circles, but she will have to prove herself in the difficult and complex education agendas. Darabos, who, as a young man, opted to perform alternative service, rather than to serve in the military, may face some resistance from military experts in the MoD.

2. (SBU) The OVP team represents continuity. Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, Economics Minister Martin Bartenstein, and Agriculture and Environment Minister Josef Proell retained the positions they held in the outgoing OVP-led government. Interior Minister Guenther Platter moves over from the defense portfolio. The former OVP Parliamentary Caucus Leader, Wilhelm Molterer, is the new Vice-Chancellor and Finance Minister. Proell, whom many commentators tout as a future OVP Chancellor candidate, has taken on the key task of "coalition coordination" with the SPO. Science Minister Johannes Hahn and Health Minister Andrea Kdolsky are newcomers. Hahn, previously head of the Vienna State OVP, will most likely work to broaden the OVP's appeal to urban, liberal voters. End Summary and Comment.

3. (U) Following are biographies of Chancellor Gusenbauer, Vice-Chancellor and Finance Minister Molterer, and the Ministers and State Secretaries in the new government.

Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer (SPO) - NEW

4. (SBU) During the campaign, Gusenbauer admitted that he has

aspired to be Chancellor since he was a schoolboy. In 2000, after the resignation of Victor Klima, Gusenbauer became SPO Party Chairman for what many thought would be an interim period. Gusenbauer simultaneously assumed the post of Social Democratic floor leader in Parliament. Following the surprising SPO victory in the October 2006 elections, Gusenbauer pursued his goal of forming a government with utmost perseverance. He methodically overcame OVP reluctance to be his junior partner, making extensive concessions to the OVP to obtain their consensus to a coalition pact.

¶5. (SBU) Gusenbauer was born on February 8, 1960 in the Lower Austrian city of St Poelten. He comes from a blue-collar background. He holds a Doctorate in Political Science from the University of Vienna. Gusenbauer has been active in the social democratic movement since his teenage years. He led the youth wing of Austria's Social Democrats for six years (1984-1990) and was a Vice President of the Socialist International in the 1980s. Gusenbauer served in the Upper House of Parliament from 1991-1993, before moving over to the more powerful Lower House. Gusenbauer has been a member of Austria's parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe since 1991.

¶6. (SBU) Gusenbauer is well known for his expertise in international affairs, especially from his years in the field of development assistance. Gusenbauer has acquired a solid working knowledge of macroeconomics and industrial relations, which he gained in part as a senior research fellow in the Economic Policy Department of the Chamber of Labor (1990-1999). He also served as the SPO's finance spokesman in 1999.

¶7. (SBU) Gusenbauer is part of the "Tuscany Faction" in the SPO, which also includes influential Vienna Mayor Michael Haeupl. He speaks fluent English and Spanish, as well as some French, and he is a wine connoisseur. His common-law spouse, Eva Steiner, is an interpreter. The couple has a daughter.

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Vice-Chancellor/Finance Minister Wilhelm Molterer (OVP)

¶8. (SBU) Wilhelm Molterer has primarily operated behind the scenes, closely working with former Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel to coordinate the OVP's parliamentary work and to pave the way toward implementation of the Schuessel government's projects. Molterer now moves into the limelight, assuming not only the positions of Vice-Chancellor and Finance Minister, but also that of acting OVP Party Chairman. At the April OVP party convention, delegates will most likely confirm him as Party Chairman. However, many commentators point to Agriculture Minister Josef Proell as the OVP's most likely chancellor candidate for the 2010 elections.

¶9. (SBU) Molterer was born May 14, 1955 in Steyr, Upper Austria. Molterer attended the Johannes Kepler University in Linz from 1974 to 1980, graduating with a Master's Degree in Social Economics. While at the university he served as president of the student union. Molterer worked as an assistant in the Agricultural Policy Department at the University of Linz from late 1979 until February 1981.

¶10. (SBU) Beginning March 1981, Molterer was head of the Economic Policy Division of the Austrian Farmers' Federation until the end of 1984. Beginning in January 1985, Molterer worked in the provincial government of Upper Austria and simultaneously as a municipal counselor in Sieming. In January 1987 Molterer became chief adviser to then-Agriculture Minister Josef Riegler. Molterer held the agricultural market organization portfolio, as well as trade and trade promotion. In April 1989 he became Chief of Staff to the new Agriculture Minister, Franz Fischler.

¶11. (SBU) Molterer served as Secretary General of the VVP from December 1993 to November 1994. In November 1994, Molterer became Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. He relinquished this post in 2003, when he assumed the position of OVP Parliamentary Floor Leader. Molterer is well liked among his colleagues and comes

across as a thoughtful, considerate politician. He is married and has two sons.

Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik (OVP)

¶12. (SBU) Ursula Plassnik's career has been closely linked with OVP Parliamentary Leader and former Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel. She became his Chief of Staff in 1997, when Schuessel was Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor. Serving as Foreign Minister since 2004, Plassnik has gradually crafted a profile as a professional and expert politician. She was unarguably an asset for the OVP during the fall 2006 elections. Despite a reputation as somewhat aloof, Plassnik has established close relationships with many of her foreign colleagues.

¶13. (SBU) Plassnik was born on May 23, 1956 in Klagenfurt, Carinthia. She was a high school exchange student in Foxcroft, Virginia in 1971-1972. Plassnik holds a Doctorate in Law from the University of Vienna (1978), and earned a post-graduate diploma from the Collège d'Europe in Bruges, Belgium. After her studies, Plassnik initially worked as a research assistant at the University of Vienna's Institute for Roman Law and Ancient Legal History. She then was an intern at a Vienna court, and had an internship in the legal department of a Vienna bank.

¶14. (SBU) Plassnik joined the Austrian foreign service in February 1981. She initially served in the MFA's International Law Department and in the Directorates for Security Policy and the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Postings abroad included Bern (1984-86), the CSCE Delegation to the Madrid Follow-up Meeting (1981-83), the Vienna Follow-up Meeting (1986-87), and to the Austrian Representation to the Council of Europe (1987-90).

¶15. (SBU) During sabbatical leave from 1990-1994, Plassnik worked at the Geneva-based European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Secretariat. In 1994, she studied at the St. Gallen Foundation for

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International Studies in Switzerland. Plassnik rejoined the MFA in November 1994, working first in the Directorate-General for Economic Policy and EU Coordination, later as head of the Directorate for the General Affairs Council and the European Council.

¶16. (SBU) Plassnik served as Wolfgang Schuessel's Chief of Staff from 1997-2003, a period when Schuessel transitioned from Vice Chancellor to Chancellor. She then became Austrian Ambassador to Switzerland (January to October 2004), but curtailed when Schuessel selected her to be Minister of Foreign Affairs. Plassnik is twice divorced.

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Defense Minister Norbert Darabos (SPO) - NEW

¶17. (SBU) Darabos has acquired a reputation as an effective political operative within the SPO. He successfully organized SPO campaigns, including the 2000 Burgenland state election and President Heinz Fischer's successful 2004 run. Darabos was instrumental in helping Gusenbauer win the October 2006 elections despite a widely unfavorable political climate for the SPO and Gusenbauer. Following the election, most analysts pegged Darabos to become Interior Minister.

¶18. (SBU) Darabos, with an ethnic Croatian background, was born May 31, 1964 in the state of Burgenland. He comes from a blue-collar family, attended a Catholic high school in Eisenstadt, and earned a Master's Degree in History and Political Science from the University of Vienna.

¶19. (SBU) Darabos' political career began as head of the Burgenland chapter of the SPO think tank "Renner Institute" in 1987. From 1991 to 1997 Darabos worked as office manager and press spokesman for the

governor of Burgenland, and then as party manager of the Burgenland SPO. From 2000 to 2003 Darabos was SPO party whip in the state parliament of Burgenland. In 2003, Gusenbauer appointed Darabos national SPO Party Manager. Since June 2004, Darabos has been a member of the federal parliament. In the 1990s Darabos represented the SPO on the Viewers' Council of the ORF National Broadcasting Agency. He was also a representative of the Croatian minority in the National Minorities Advisory Council.

¶20. (SBU) Darabos is the first Austrian defense minister who chose to satisfy his compulsory service requirement through alternative community service in lieu of military service. His hobbies are table tennis and soccer. He is president of a local soccer club. Darabos is married and has two teen-age children. His family still lives in his hometown of Kroatisch-Minihof, Burgenland.

Interior Minister Guenther Platter (OVP)

¶21. (SBU) Defense Minister in the outgoing government, Platter was born in Zams, Tyrol, on June 7, 1954. He is a trained printer, but joined the police force after his military service (1973-1974) and subsequently served in the Tyrolean towns of Landeck and Imst, specializing in criminal investigation. In 1986, Platter's political career began as a municipal councilor in his hometown of Zams, where he later served as mayor (1989-2000). In 1994, Platter became an OVP parliamentarian. In this function, he was a member of the Committees on both Internal and Defense Affairs, and also the National Defense Council.

¶22. (SBU) In 2000, Platter became the Deputy Party Chairman of Tyrolean OVP. He served as a minister in the state government of Tyrol responsible for sports, culture, schools, employees' interests, and immigration issues. Since 2001, he has also been Chairman of the Tyrolean Employees' Association. In February 2003, Platter joined the second Schuessel cabinet as Minister of Defense. Commentators have speculated that Platter is the heir-apparent to the Tyrolean Governor Herwig Van Staa. Platter and his wife have two sons, aged 16 and 20.

Minister of Economy and Labor Martin Bartenstein (OVP)

¶23. (SBU) Martin Bartenstein has held ministerial positions since 1996 when he became Environment Minister. He became Minister of Economy and Labor in 2000. Bartenstein was born on June 3, 1953, in Graz, Styria. He holds a Doctorate in Chemistry from the University of Graz.

¶24. (SBU) In 1978, Bartenstein joined his family's pharmaceutical company (Lannacher Heilmittel GmbH) and served as General Manager from 1980 until 1995. Bartenstein has also worked in the executive offices of Genericon Pharma GesmbH and Parmavit AG, Budapest. Bartenstein's political career began in 1991, when he became an OVP parliamentarian. From 1994 to 1995, he served as Under Secretary in the Ministry of Public Economy and Transportation, and then subsequently as Minister of the Environment and Public Economy (1995 - 1996). From 1996 to 2000, Bartenstein was Minister of the Environment, Youth, and Family Affairs in the SPO-OVP government. In February 2000, he became Minister of Economy and Labor in the Schuessel-led OVP-FPO coalition. Since 1992, Bartenstein has also served as Deputy Chairman of the Styrian OVP, and, since 1992, as President of "Austrian Children Cancer Aid." He is married and has five children.

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Justice Minister Maria Berger (SPO) - NEW

¶25. (SBU) Berger was born on August 19, 1959, in Upper Austria. She was head of the SPO youth organization "Young Generation," concentrating on justice issues. As a Member of the European

Parliament (MEP) since 1996, she served on the Justice Affairs Committee, and, most recently, as justice spokeswoman for the European Social Democrats. Berger's academic career includes positions as Assistant Professor at Innsbruck University, and Vice-President of the Lower Austrian Danube University. In her initial statements as Justice Minister, Berger stressed the need to take further measures to combat human trafficking, both at the European and the domestic level, and for more international cooperation to fight "crime tourism."

Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure Werner Faymann (SPO)
- NEW

126. (SBU) Werner Faymann, previously the Vienna City Councilor for Housing Construction, was born on May 24, 1960. He was, together with Gusenbauer, active in the SPO youth organization "Socialist Youth" in the 1980s. He then shifted to Vienna city politics, and became a City Councilor in 1994. Faymann has cultivated excellent contacts with the media. He is married and has two children.

Minister for Agriculture and Environment Josef Proell (OVP)

127. (SBU) Many observers consider Josef Proell, the nephew of influential Lower Austrian Governor Erwin Proell, as the most obvious long term successor to Schuessel OVP leader. Apart from his ministerial position, Proell has also taken on the task of "coalition coordinator" for the OVP vis-à-vis the SPO.

128. (SBU) Proell was born on September 14, 1968 in the Lower Austrian city of Stockerau. Proell studied agricultural economics at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna from 1987-1993. From 1993 to 1998, Proell worked at the regional Chamber of Agriculture in Lower Austria. From 1998 to 2000, he was in charge of economic policy at the Austrian Farmers' Federation. During this period he also worked as a staffer to OVP MEP Agnes Schierhuber.

129. (SBU) From January 1999 to August 2000, Proell was Director of the Vienna chapter of the Austrian Farmers' Federation. He subsequently became Chief of Staff for then Minister of Agriculture Wilhelm Molterer. From December 2001 through February 2003, Proell served as Director of the Austrian Farmers' Federation. In February 2003, Chancellor Schuessel appointed him Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. Proell is married and has three children.

Minister for Health, Family and Youth Andrea Kdolsky (OVP) - NEW

130. (SBU) Kdolsky, formerly a manager in the Lower Austrian Hospital Holding Company, is a newcomer to federal politics. She was born on November 2, 1962 in Vienna. Kdolsky studied Law and International Trade at Vienna University and the Vienna Business School respectively. In 1993 she obtained a Doctoral Degree from the Vienna Medical School. Subsequently, Kdolsky attended a training program for hospital management and economics at the Vienna Business School.

131. (SBU) After a year of residence in 1995, Kdolsky began specializing in anesthesiology, intensive care medicine, and pain therapy at Vienna's General Hospital. From 2001 to 2004 she was a senior physician at the respected Vienna University Clinic. Having worked briefly as a Deputy Manager for the Federal Institute for International Education and Technology Transfer (BIB), Kdolsky in 2005 moved to the Hospital Holding Company of the state of Lower Austria, moving up to the position of Manager for Medical Affairs in March 2006.

Minister for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection
Erwin Buchinger (SPO) - NEW

132. (SBU) Political analysts had consistently considered Erwin

Buchinger, formerly Salzburg State Councilor for Social Affairs, as the top SPO candidate for an economic or social affairs ministerial portfolio. He is close to Salzburg Governor Gabi Burgstaller. He served as a social affairs and labor expert to Burgstaller during

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her successful 2004 campaign, acquiring the nickname "Mr. Labor." Buchinger was born in 1955 in Mauthausen, Upper Austria, and holds a Doctorate in Law from the University of Linz, where he also studied macroeconomics. From 1981 to 1991 Buchinger worked as a law expert in the Public Employment Agency of the state of Upper Austria. Subsequently, he became Director of the Employment Office in the state of Salzburg. In 2004, Buchinger became a member of the Salzburg state government, where he was responsible for social and employment affairs. Buchinger is married with two adult children.

Science Minister Johannes Hahn (OVP) - NEW

¶33. (SBU) Hahn is a representative of the OVP's liberal urban wing. As Vienna OVP Party Chairman since 2003, he attempted to win voters' support for a more liberal agenda, e.g., calling for a more consideration of legalizing same-sex relations.

¶34. (SBU) Hahn was born on December 2, 1957, in Vienna. He holds a Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Vienna. In the 1980s, Hahn worked for the Association of Austrian Industrialists (1985 - 1987), the Economic Forum for Business Leaders (1987 - 1989), and held various management positions in the partially government-owned VA Tech industrial group. In the late 1990s Hahn worked for Novomatic AG, becoming company CEO in 2003.

¶35. (SBU) Hahn's political career includes positions as chairman of the OVP youth wing (1980-1985), Vienna Party Manager (1992 - 1997), and member of the Vienna Municipal Council since 1996. In November 2003 Hahn became a member of the Vienna state government, and in 2005 OVP Party Chairman in Vienna. He is married with one son.

Minister for Education and Art Claudia Schmied (SPO) - NEW

¶36. (SBU) Schmied was born on May 10, 1959. The appointment of Schmied, a Viennese banker, surprised most political observers. Schmied has substantial knowledge of art and cultural matters through various positions on boards of the Salzburg Art Festival and the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra, but virtually no experience with education matters.

¶37. (SBU) After obtaining a business degree, Schmied worked for the Investcredit Bank. In 1997 she worked as an advisor to then SPO Finance Minister Rudolf Edlinger. In 1999, she returned to Investcredit Bank, responsible for international affairs and expansion into Eastern Europe.

Women's Issues Minister Doris Bures (SPO) - NEW

¶38. (SBU) Bures was born on August 3, 1962. She is one of Gusenbauer's closest longtime advisors. She has been an SPO MP since 1990. When Gusenbauer became Party Chairman in 2000, Bures moved into the position of SPO Party Manager. Despite frequent criticism of her uninspiring media presence, she remained Party Manager until Gusenbauer asked her to take on the women's issues portfolio. The creation of a separate Women's Ministry was a key objective for the SPO. Bures has a daughter.

State Secretaries

MFA State Secretary Hans Winkler (OVP)

¶39. (SBU) Winkler assumed the position of MFA State Secretary in ¶2005. The GoA established this position primarily to prepare for and manage the Austrian EU Presidency in the first half of 2006. Winkler has become an important and well-respected adviser to Foreign Minister Plassnik, with special focus on EU matters.

¶40. (SBU) Winkler was born on January 13, 1945 in Vienna. He earned a Doctorate in Law from the University of Vienna in 1968. Subsequently, he studied four years at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna and entered the Austrian Foreign Service in 1970. After two years in the MFA's Legal Office, Winkler served in Berlin from 1972 to 1973. From 1973 to 1978, he served in Washington, as well as in Belgrade and Cairo during much of the 1980s. From 1987 to 1992, Winkler headed the MFA's International Law Office. From 1992 to 1996, he was Austria's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. He served as Head of the MFA's Americas Department from 1996 to 1999, and subsequently the MFA's Legal Office. During 2002 to 2005, he also served as Deputy Secretary General in the MFA. In July 2005, he was appointed State Secretary.

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Winkler is married and has one child.

Finance Ministry State Secretary Christoph Matznetter (SPO) - NEW

¶41. (SBU) Matznetter played an important role in the coalition talks on the budget. As SPO spokesman on budget and finance policy, Matznetter has been a key figure in developing SPO budget policy positions. He has been a close adviser of Gusenbauer for many years.

¶42. (SBU) Matznetter was born on June 8, 1959, in Vienna. He studied political science, and then became a tax consultant. Between 1976 and 1980, Matznetter was on the Executive Board of the Socialist Youth, and in 2000 he became a member of the SPO Executive Board. In 2002, he entered parliament and became SPO spokesman for financial and budget affairs. Since June 2005, Matznetter has also been President of the Social Democrat's entrepreneurs' association. Matznetter is married with three children.

State Secretary in the Federal Chancellery Heidrun Silhavy (SPO) - NEW

¶43. (SBU) Heidrun Silhavy most recently served as the SPO's social affairs spokeswoman in parliament. From a trade union background, Silhavy was born on May 20, 1956, in Graz, Styria. She started working in the Styrian Chamber of Labor in 1976. In 1981, she became Secretary General of the Styrian women's trade union. In 1994, she moved into the national legislature. She has a son and two grandchildren.

State Secretary in the Federal Chancellery for Sports Reinhold Lopatka (OVP) - NEW

¶44. (SBU) In the October 2006 elections, Lopatka was the OVP campaign manager. He led the successful OVP campaign in 2002, after which he became the OVP's Party Manager. He was born on January 27, 1960, in Vorau, Styria. He obtained a degree in Law and Theology from Graz University, and then started work in OVP youth politics. In 1986, Lopatka entered the Styrian state legislature. In 2000, he became OVP Floor Leader in the Styrian state legislature. He was also Styrian OVP Party Manager from 1993 to 2001. Lopatka is married and has three sons. He is an avid marathon runner.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Economy and Labor Christine Marek (OVP) - NEW

¶45. (SBU) Christine Marek enters government with a low profile.

With a trade union background, Marek will concentrate on labor market issues. She was born on January 26, 1968, in Kempten, Germany and grew up in Upper Austria. She worked for an IT company and became head of the company's work council. Since May 2000, Marek has been on the executive board of the Vienna Chamber of Labor. Marek is also Deputy Chairwoman of the Vienna OVP.

State Secretary in the Infrastructure Ministry Christa Kranzl (SPO)
- NEW

146. (SBU) Christa Kranzl, previously the Lower Austrian state Councilor for Social Affairs, was Gusenbauer's high school classmate. In her position in the Lower Austrian state government, she covered schools, social administration and consumer protection. She was born on April 19, 1960. She worked in the Persenbeug-Gottsdorf city administration from 1978 to 1991, and was a member of the city government from 1987 to 2005. In 1999, she became Lower Austrian state Councilor for Social Affairs. She is married and has two children.

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